MONA'S CHOICE.

(Continued from fifth page.)

garden, as Mona was out shopping for madame, whose staff expanded at sale time, a smart footman overtook her, accosting her with the words, "If you please'm, Lady Finistoun wanted be glad to speak to you."

"Lady Finistoun!" repeated Mona, looking comfy. "Where is she?"

"Her ladyship is in the carriage, close by."

Following the man, Mona was soon shaking hands with her former ally.

"I was so afraid I should miss you, dear," cried the young princess, shaking hands warmly with her. "I was afraid you had vanished from me altogether. Bertie told me about meeting you abroad with a wealthy old millionaire of an uncle. Come, let me drive you wherever you are going, or better still, let me take you to see baby. Such a dear, darling baby. You will be enchanted with him. Do come in. Open the door, William."

"Oh, yes! I should be so delighted to see your baby, dear Evelyn!" said Mona.

The next minute she was seated beside Lady Finistoun, and driving toward that lady's house.

"Why did you not let me know you were in town?"

"I have not been long here," returned Mona, "and I have been busy. Now did I think of looking you up. You see it is no use attempting to be on the old footing. We must drift apart."

"Oh, nonsense! You look as well, indeed better than ever. You will never lose your style, Mona, and I dare say you will succeed very well, especially with this rich uncle behind you."

"My uncle has an heir."

"No! Has he? How very disgraceful! Never mind, dear, you are evidently a favorite of fortune. Where are you staying now?"

"With Madame Debrisay."

"And what have you done with the uncle?"

"He has quarrelled with me and left me."

"Oh, you foolish girl! How did you offend him?"

"It is too long a story to tell you now. Tell me about yourself."

Nothing loath, Lady Finistoun poured forth the annals of a golden life flooded with the sunshine of prosperity, with busy pleasure and careless, though kindly hearts.

Soon they reached Hyde Park Gardens, and Lady Finistoun sent a peremptory message to nurse. She soon appeared with the Hon. Hector Aubrey Douglas Montgomerie in her arms, a very active young gentleman, who did his best to precipitate himself headforemost on the face jumping, crowing, clutching at his nurse's cap, and chuckling after the fashion of babies from St. James' to St. Giles'. He held out his plump, mottled arms to his delighted mother, who proudly took him, and then, as the highest mark of affection and confidence gave him to Mona. She received him with no small apprehension, though pronounching him, with genuine admiration to be a splendid fellow, and "so like Lord Finistoun."

"Do you see the likeness too? Yes, I think he is. But do you know, Mona, he has the Newbrough grey eyes? They are like your Mona. Don't you think baby's eyes are very like Miss Joscelyn's? I mean Mrs. Cudgels." (Your name always puzzles me, Mona.)

"Perhaps so, my lady. They are very fine eyes, any way."

A little more showing off, and nurse noticed that her lady had had as much of baby's society as was good for them all. She suggested that the young gentleman's own apartment was cooler and fresher for him than the drawing room. After a little more kissing and cuddling he was taken away, and Lady Finistoun and her kinswoman sat down to tea.

"I am so glad you are pleased with the boy. I could see by your eyes you were ready to love him. There are lots of people, early to exclaim, 'He is a fine child!' but few look at him as you did, dear Mona!" cried the young mother. "Take off your hat, and we shall have a nice chat over our tea. I am not at home to anyone, Pomkins!" to the butler. "I want you to come and stay with me at Strathaitlie. As soon as our cruise is over we are going for a week to the Chase, and will be in the Highlands the second week of September. Will you come, Mona?"

"I do not think I can. I shall want to be in town by the first of October, and—"

"Oh, but you really must come! And then, didn't Bertie tell me that the millionaire uncle had a place quite near? Then you can make friends with him. We will ask him to dinner. Those sort of people are always so pleased when they are asked to dinner."

"I do not go anywhere. I shall stay very thankfully with my good friend Mme. Debrisay, who never changes toward me."

"Yes, she is a dear old thing! But fancy living in London all the year. You will make yourself ill, Mona."

"Just there, Evelyn, of the hundreds of people who never quit it, and live on."

"Then they are quite different."

"I cannot see," began Mona, when Lady Finistoun interrupting her, exclaimed—

"Oh, Mona! do you remember Captain Dale?"

"I do."

"He has come into a large property and a baronetcy."

"Oh, indeed! How did that happen?"

"I think he always expected it. Old Sir Roger's Dale was a relation of his father's and as they were a non marrying set of men, an acquaintance, though not a near cousin, was the next heir."

"So after all, he was not a poor man. He had wealth and position almost in his grasp when he shrank from sharing his life with her, thought Mona, while Lady Finistoun rattled on. "But I suppose there are many like him," was her conclusion.

"I rather think my mother would have liked him for Geraldine, but I am not so sure he would have made a good husband." Lady Finistoun was saying when Mona listened again. "These fascinating, all accomplished men seldom do. They tell queer stories about them. The Countess of Northallerton went out of her mind about him, so it is said, and only the earl had a sudden there would have been a fearful row."

"He was very agreeable," said Mona, quietly.

"Yes. He has been very popular in his day, but he is coming home now on urgent private affairs, I suppose, and will probably leave the army. You are not going yet, Mona?"

"I must. Madame Debrisay will be looking for me."

Lady Finistoun embraced her affectionately, and Mona walked leisurely home through Kensington Gardens in a very thoughtful mood.

* * * * * * *

The encounter with Lady Finistoun afforded much matter for talk to Mme. Debrisay. She did not press Mona to accept her invitation.

"I am not sure it would do you any good, dear. It is better to keep with those of your own trade. It went to my heart to see you leave your beautiful home, and the society you were used to; but it had to be done, and there is no use in looking back. Life has many sides, and there's none without its own spark of light."

So the friends enjoyed the quiet holiday time together. Providence fortunate their leaving town. But Mona, fresh from her wanderings, was glad to rest, and Mme. Debrisay was quite content while she had Mona.

Kenneth wrote occasionally. Uncle Sandy was greatly annoyed at the mismanagement of all things appertaining to the farm during his absence. He had dismissed the man he had left in charge, and was determined, with Kenneth's help, to direct everything himself; but he was very unwell and fractious. He never mentioned Mona's name, but Kenneth was of opinion

"Here is a letter from Uncle Sandy."

that he thought of her a good deal. Meantime there was no chance of his getting away, and he began to fear that it would be many a month before he could see his Highland Mary.

The days and weeks flew by rapidly, and Mme. Debrisay was beginning to think of work again, when one morning in the first week of September, the post brought Mona a letter addressed in exceedingly shaky, spider like calligraphy. It bore the postmark of "Kirkstone," and having looked at it curiously for a moment, she exclaimed—

"Why, here is a letter from Uncle Sandy!"

"You don't say so! Read it to me, if you will."

"I'll try. What an awful hand."

"My Dear Niece—As you have had time to think over your unkind and ungrateful conduct to your natural protector and nearest of kin, I make no doubt you are sorry and ashamed of yourself. But, as youth is always willful and self-opinionated, I dare say false shame holds you back from saying you are sorry. Therefore, for the sake of your father, and indeed, for your own, I will believe that you say them in your heart, and are willing to atone to me, by trying to be a comfort to my poor troubled old age, which you have been all the time we journeyed together.

"Kenneth is a good lad, and decently sensible out of doors, but within it is awful (hospitable without a woman to order things. I therefore propose that, if you are penitent, as I hope you are, you come and stay with me as my daughter, to look after me, and rule my house, and I promise that you shall not be asked to wed with anyone you do not like, but that if you do wed, and leave me, you will find some wise-like woman to bide with me, and care for me, in your place.

"Now, you must write at once to me, yes or no, and then come as soon as you can start. Kenneth shall meet you in Glasgow. As you are young and strong, you might take the night train and come on here when you have taken a bite of breakfast in Glasgow. Feeling sure you will come to your old uncle, I inclose you a post office order for three pounds five shillings and sixpence, to pay your fare (second class), and a cab and such like. And I'll give you a trifle for clothes every quarter regular, as we may agree upon. If your heart is good toward me, you might lose no time and be with me by Thursday first. For I am just wearying for you, my dearie! And give my respects to Madame. May be she'll come up in holiday time and pay us a visit. It is always a treat to look on the Highlands, and you'll be bonnier than ever when you live in the sweet mountain air. Now just answer straight, and as you answer, so I'll be your loving uncle or no.

"ALEXANDER CRAIG."

"Well," said Mme. Debrisay, her countenance falling, "I always expected it. What'll you do, dear?"

"Do?" repeated Mona, slowly. "I scarcely think I have any choice. You see he voluntarily removes all cause of complaint, but it is hard to leave you, Deb."

"It is cruelly hard to let you go; but I must. Now, Mona, my dear, be careful in answering that letter. You must show him that you are sacrificing independence to nurse him. And do not commit yourself to stay with him always."

"How can I bargain with a poor old man that loves me?"

"He loves his 'siller' better. You must not sacrifice yourself, Mona. Let me write what I want you to say, and you can modify it if you like; but you must let him see that you are giving up independence for his sake. Now is the time to make a clean tale, and you realize the chance."

"Very well, Deb. In such a matter two heads are better than one. There is one point I will stipulate for—a yearly holiday to come and see you! That will revive me, and you too, will it not?"

"Ah, my darlin' child, it will indeed!"

The tears sprang to Mme. Debrisay's bright, expressive eyes, and leaning toward her beloved pupil, she kissed her affectionately.

"Now, dear," she continued, "let us get rid of the breakfast things, and concoct one famous letter."

It was a piece of work not to be quickly done. The collaborators had wide differences of opinion as to what was and was not to be insisted upon. Mona had mostly her own way, but, nevertheless, was a good deal influenced by her friend's shrewd advice.

Finally, the letter was dispatched. As soon as the post could bring a reply came another epistle agreeing to everything, and expressing Uncle Sandy's extreme satisfaction. He gave his niece a few commissions to execute respecting books, papers, etc., and promised to subscribe to an Edinburgh circulating library, that they might

(To be continued.)

When Baby was sick, we gave her Castoria,
When she was a Child, she cried for Castoria,
When she became Miss, she clung to Castoria,
When she had Children, she gave them Castoria.

Occasional doses of a good cathartic like Burdock Pills are necessary to keep the blood pure and the body healthy.—25-c.

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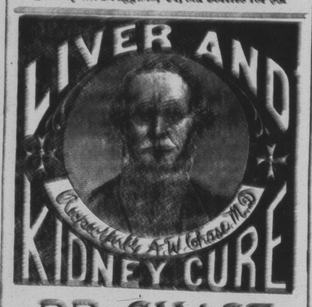

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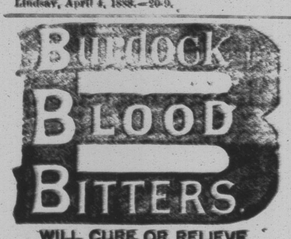

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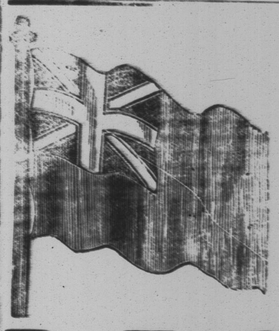

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